

## Commonly Asked Questions

### ***What ages are included in the Widely Held Expectations?***

They apply to all children in North Carolina who are three, four, and five years old and are not yet age-eligible to enter kindergarten. Included are children with and without disabilities, children who speak English and those who are learning English, and children participating in any type of early care and education program. Throughout this book, we refer to these children as “preschool-age.”

### ***Who will use the material in this book?***

Educators in Title I, Head Start, Even Start, More at Four, Exceptional Children, and Developmental Day classrooms within public schools should use it as a guide for their planning. Copies will also be available to educators in all other early childhood programs across the state, regardless of their location or setting, in the hope that they, too, will find it a helpful resource for planning.

### ***How is this different from standards we already have?***

This document outlines expectations for children’s growth and development, rather than defining how programs should operate. While program standards establish expectations for program features such as adult:child ratio or group size, here the focus is on what we want children to learn or develop. These expectations are known as “early learning standards,” and they define the areas of child growth and development that should be the focus of daily activities.

### ***Is this a curriculum for preschool programs?***

No, it is not. The Widely Held Expectations and suggested teaching strategies are intended to provide a lens for looking at curricula and daily activities to see if they address important areas of child development. The expectations define what children should have the opportunity to learn.

The curriculum and daily activities are how we go about helping them learn in areas described in the Widely Held Expectations. Any number of curricula or types of activities can be used to help children gain the knowledge, skills, and characteristics outlined in these pages.

### ***Is this an assessment tool?***

The Widely Held Expectations are neither an assessment tool nor a checklist. They represent the combined thinking of many early childhood educators, researchers, parents, and community members about what children might reasonably be expected to know and be able to do during the preschool years.

Once again, they represent what we want children to progress toward. Early educators will use the expectations to plan their curricula and use assessments to gather information about how children are progressing in relation to the expectations. Assessments can shed light on areas in which individual children

need additional support, which in turn helps the educator plan appropriate activities or experiences.

### ***What research base forms the foundation for the Widely Held Expectations?***

They are based on what we know about children's growth and development from theory and research. The work of James Hymes and theorists such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Erickson, Gardner, Bandura, and Gurian have provided the field of early education with an extraordinary understanding of how young children develop and learn.<sup>8</sup>

Dr. T. Berry Brazelton's view of child development as a sequence of social and emotional "touchpoints"<sup>9</sup> and the book *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*<sup>10</sup> were particularly important in shaping our view of the importance of emotional-social development. Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory was the basis for the emphasis on children's development being impacted by numerous

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<sup>8</sup> See Bibliography, *Child Development*

<sup>9</sup> T.B. Brazelton and J.D. Sparrow, *Touchpoints: 3 to 6* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000).

systems, including the classroom, the family, the community, and early childhood policies.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Why are they organized around domains of development?***

The five domains identified in this book are included in North Carolina’s official definition of school readiness, developed by the Ready for School Goal Team. It is well established that children’s development is integrated, or holistic, with progress in one domain influencing development in all of the others. Every child, including those with disabilities, will demonstrate varying degrees of strengths in developmental domains. All five domains are equally important in children’s development and for children’s success later in school.

### ***How can this material be used to help families of preschoolers?***

A question parents often ask is “What should my child be learning?” Early educators can and should use the Widely Held Expectations as a tool to talk with families about what to expect as their children grow and develop and for helping families understand goals for each child. Each domain in this book features simple and effective family strategies that can be shared.

### ***How does the classroom environment support the Widely Held Expectations?***

The importance of providing age-appropriate and stimulating environments for children cannot be over-emphasized.<sup>12</sup> Classrooms should be nurturing, comfortable places, rich in materials and experiences that facilitate learning. Though beyond the scope of this book, the North Carolina Public Schools publications *Guide for the Early Years* and *Learning Through the Eyes of a Child* are good resources for creating an ideal learning environment that promotes children’s learning and development.

### ***How do these Widely Held Expectations relate to what’s expected of children in kindergarten?***

The expectations for preschool lay the foundation for what children will be able to learn and do in the next phase of their education. They are aligned with the *North Carolina Kindergarten Standard Course of Study* (as the chart below illustrates) and include abilities and characteristics that pave the way for children to be successful in school and later in life. When adults provide experiences that foster children’s development in the areas described in the Widely Held Expectations, they are helping children develop skills and characteristics that will be important in kindergarten and later grades.

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<sup>11</sup> U. Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

<sup>12</sup> See Bibliography, *Learning Environments*